

Legislation Puts Veteran Families on Equal Footing With Civilian Families

Las Cruces, NM – This week, Congressman Harry Teague introduced a bill to extend the health care coverage period for dependents of disabled veterans. The CHAMPVA Dependent Coverage Extension Act (HR 5206) would provide health insurance to dependents of permanently and totally disabled veterans, as well as veterans who died from serviced connected disabilities, through the age of 26. Currently under CHAMPVA, which is administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA), coverage can only be provided to dependent children up to the age of 23.

“Our veterans risked their lives to fight for our country and it is our responsibility to honor and reward their sacrifice. Families of disabled veterans and veterans who have died from service connected injuries have sacrificed so much, and extending health insurance coverage for their children is one clear way to thank and support them,” said Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. “This bill fills a void created by the healthcare reform bill by giving these heroes the same health insurance benefits given to civilians, a right they’ve clearly earned.”

The legislation would make one of the most popular provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), signed in to law earlier this year, available to families that depend on health insurance governed by the VA. Under the PPACA, individuals with private health insurance will be able to provide coverage to their dependent children up to the age of 26.

Currently, eligibility for CHAMPVA is lost when a child reaches 18 or when a child, who has been a full-time student, turns 23. The extended benefit in this legislation would take effect on October 1st of this year.

Congressman Teague has made veterans' issues a top priority, helping to secure advanced appropriations funding for the VA and introducing legislation aimed at addressing and reducing the impact of mental health issues like PTSD have on the lives of returning veterans. Recently, his bill to provide per diem and lodging payments to caregivers who accompany veterans on hospital visits was signed in to law as part of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act.

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